

REMARKS

As a result of this amendment, claims 7-25 are now in the application.

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a).

Claims 1 and 2 have been canceled, and claims 7 and 14 have been amended to eliminate use of the term "adjacent" with regard to the position of threads relative to the flutes. It is believed that the changes made to claims 7 and 14 regarding the screw thread eliminates any objection to the drawings. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections to the drawings be withdrawn.

The rejections of claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) have been duly noted and have been rendered moot as a consequence of Applicant's cancellation of those claims.

Applicant requests reconsideration of the rejection of claims 7, 8 and 11-19 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dicke (U.S. Patent No. 6,698,987) in view of Piacenti et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,046,905) and further in view of Donner (U.S. Patent No. 6,832,696), and also the rejection of claims 9 and 10 as unpatentable over references Dicke, Piacenti et al. and Donner, further in view of Konig (U.S. Patent No. 5,772,376).

This request for reconsideration is premised on the fact that the references, whether considered individually or collectively, do not teach or suggest Applicant's unique strip in combination with fasteners that are characterized by a drill section, a screw section, cutting rings projecting from the drill section, and cutting blades formed on a tapered surface of the fastener heads.

It is to be noted that claims 7-19 all call for the strip having holes with a plurality of fastener-gripping ribs, and webs connecting the ribs at their upper ends, the ribs and the webs serving to grasp the fasteners and hold them in vertical alignment in the strip. The webs serve to keep the fasteners perpendicular in the strip. However, in order to assure that the fasteners can be rapidly driven out of the strip, the fasteners are provided with cutting ribs on their underside that serve to sever the webs and fastener-gripping ribs when the fasteners are driven into locking relation with superimposed structural components as described in Applicant's specification.

The patent to Dicke discloses a fastener that does not disclose a supporting strip as called for by Applicant's claims. The same is true of the patent to Piacenti et al. To make up for the deficiencies of Dicke and Piacenti et al., the Examiner has relied upon Donner (U.S. Patent No. 6,832,696). However, in applying Donner, the Examiner has not accurately characterized the Donner structure. The Examiner has characterized Donner as comprising a plurality of ribs 3A, 3B, although the patent identifies those elements as "retaining webs". Similarly, the Examiner has characterized the element 9 as a web, whereas the element 9 is characterized as a "small retaining ring" by the patentee.

Regardless of the Examiner's interpretation of Donner, it is clear that Donner does not have a plurality of holes each characterized by a plurality of ribs, with those ribs being joined at their upper ends by a web which is a continuation of the upper surface of the strip. The elements 3A and 3B of Donner project below the patentee's strip 1. Those elements define a hole. On the other hand, if the ring element 9 is viewed as defining the hole, then the elements 3A and 3B must be construed as being ribs, but those ribs extend below the lower surface of the strip 1

rather than extending lengthwise between the top and bottom surfaces of the strip as called for by Applicant's claims 7-19.

For the foregoing reason it is clear that Dicke, Piacenti et al. and Donner do not teach or suggest the combination of a plastic strip and a fastener supported by that strip as defined by Applicant's claims 7-19 as herein amended.

The patent to Konig was cited as disclosing fasteners having a head with ribs of rectangular cross-section. However, Konig does not teach or suggest a plastic strip as called for by claims 7-19. Hence Konig does not make up for the deficiencies of the other references cited by the Examiner.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that claims 7-19 are patentable over the prior art of record.

New claim 20 depends from claim 14 and adds the requirement that the webs have a thickness that is a fraction of the spacing between the top and bottom surfaces of the strip. That feature, which has a basis in Applicant's specification, is novel with Applicant and is not suggested or rendered obvious by the references of record.

New independent claim 21 is patterned after claim 14. It is believed to be allowable for the same reasons as that claim.

Dependent claims 22-25 all depend from claim 21 and are patentable for the same reasons and also because there are other limitations which are novel with Applicant.

In view of the foregoing amendments and comments, Applicant respectfully submits that this amendment places the application in

condition for allowance. Therefore, prompt and favorable reconsideration is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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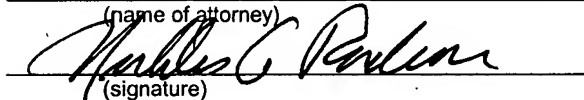
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